

# The Circle

Vol 15 No. 1

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## **Editor's Note...**

This is it. The fall issue of The Circle. After looking over the various topics concerning students around campus, we decided that AIDS and being gay at Auburn had been done too many times. While we've maintained space for articles, this year our format is geared toward artistic pursuits. If this issue seems thin, it is because we've endeavored to use only the best stories and artwork. We do not expect everyone to like everything in this issue, but we do hope that there is something for everyone.

If not, come in and give us your opinion. Better yet, join the staff. Since The Circle is funded by Auburn University student activity fees, you have the right to help select what will or will not go into the next issue. You may be inspired to write something original, thereby increasing the selection of works we have to choose from. All it takes is one night a week. Stop by.

Rebecca Haack

Cover by Shelley Paap



*The Circle*, financed by student activity fees, serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. It aims to appeal to a diverse Auburn audience by providing a variety of articles, essays, short stories, art and photography. The views expressed throughout the issue are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the publisher (the Board of Student Communications) or those of the *The Circle* staff or editorial board.

The Circle

Volume 15, Number 1

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# **The Circle**

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# The Life and Works of Robert Penn Warren

by Matt Michaud

The South has produced many great writers, but none have shown the versatility and persistence of the late Robert Penn Warren. Warren has made significant contributions to the diverse fields of fiction, poetry, drama, biography, essay, literary and social criticism, and education over the course of his sixty year career. Another tribute to his ability and versatility is the fact that he remains the only person ever to win the Pulitzer Prize for both fiction and poetry. The honors heaped upon Warren have been many, but an examination of his life and works would be more beneficial, not to mention far more interesting, than a listing of the awards and positions Warren held during his lifetime.

Robert Penn Warren was born on April 24, 1905, in the small tobacco market town of Guthrie, Kentucky. Warren's early education was centered on history books by authors such as Gibbon, Buckle, and Parkman. This early fascination with history persisted throughout his maturity and came to permeate his novels. Indeed, the constant presence of books during Warren's childhood seems to have almost predetermined a career in letters for this shy, gangly redhead. After graduating from high school at the age of 16, Warren entered Vanderbilt University in the fall of 1921. While there he fell under the influence of John Crowe Ransom, his teacher for freshman English, and soon scrapped his original plans for studying science. Warren was enchanted by literature. For him the drama of fiction and the beauty of poetry held more keys to the mysteries of human life than chemistry ever could.

At Vanderbilt Warren became involved with the "Fugitives," a group of men who wrote poetry and were interested in poetic technique, the "nuts and bolts" of poetry. The group published a magazine, *The Fugitive*, which was one of Warren's earliest forums for his own poetry. The Fugitives had a lifelong impact on Warren, who became friends with many of the members. Donald Davidson, a teacher, first opened Warren's eyes to T.S. Eliot's influential poem *The Waste Land* when it appeared in 1922. Allen Tate, Warren's roommate and a fellow poet, encouraged the gawky but talented boy in his poetical endeavors. Warren became a virtual disciple of Tate, whose confidence in Warren's poetic abilities never faltered. Warren also picked up ideas concerning literary criticism while a member of the Fugitives. At meetings each member's poems were subjected to intense formalistic criticism, a style which Warren echoes in his textbook *Understanding Poetry* (1938), co-written with Cleanth Brooks.

born. This work was a major achievement and shows how early Warren's abilities matured. The biography appeared in November 1929 when Warren was just twenty-four years old. Unfortunately, *John Brown* received little economic or critical support due to the Great Crash in October 1929.

While in Oxford Warren's writings focused on American society, thus following the leads of many other expatriate writers such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Warren's contributions to the sub-genre of expatriate writing included an essay on segregation for the Agrarian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). The essay, "The Briar Patch," was a defense of segregation, a position which Warren himself later reversed in another, longer essay *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South*. In his later essay Warren saw the segregation problem not in terms of abstract morality but rather in terms of practical, possible solutions. Warren's proposed solution in Segregation was gradual but definite reform. This reversal of position was

*For him the drama of fiction and the beauty of poetry held more keys to the mystery of human life than chemistry ever could*

In 1925 Warren graduated from Vanderbilt and left the loose-knit Fugitive group. Warren went to the University of California at Berkley where he earned his Master of Arts degree in English. He spent a year in school at Yale University and then got an appointment as a Rhodes scholar to Oxford, leaving for England in the fall of 1928. It was then that Warren made his first impact on American letters. His old friend Allen Tate had secured a deal for him to write a biography of John Brown. It was from this deal that *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* was

not merely a "sell-out" to the desegregation forces that were becoming more vocal by the late 1950s. It was instead a frank, open-minded reappraisal of the segregation problem which illustrated Warren's considerable powers of observation and social criticism. The other important piece to come out of the time at Oxford was Warren's first published short story, "Prime Leaf" (1931). This is a story about the conflict between tobacco growers and Eastern buyers in the Kentucky of Warren's childhood. Warren developed the themes sketched out in

this story more fully in his first novel, *Night Rider* (1939).

In 1930 Warren returned from England to begin his teaching career. After spending a year at Southwestern College in Memphis Warren moved to Vanderbilt to teach. Then in 1934 he took a position in the English department of Louisiana State University at the time when Huey Long was at the height of power. The experience at LSU led to the composition of two short stories, "The Life and Work of Professor Roy Millan" and "The Unvexed Isles," about life at a small Southern college. Warren also helped found the influential literary magazine *Southern Review* at LSU. But the greatest achievement to grow out of the eight years at Baton Rouge was *All the King's Men* (1946).

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*In 1930 Warren returned from England to begin his teaching career.*

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*All the King's Men* is a novel of political corruption and the effects of power on the men who wield it. The main character of this Pulitzer Prize winning novel, Willie Stark, is obviously modelled on the flamboyant, dictatorial Louisiana politician, Huey Long. In a series of flashbacks Warren shows how Cousin Willie's idealistic vision of politics is transformed into Governor Willie's Machiavellian approach to real politics. While Governor Stark is the focus of the novel's story, it is the spiritual and philosophical development of the narrator, Jack Burden, that better accomplishes the aim of Warren's fiction: the exploration of what it is to be human. *All the King's Men* has delighted both the critics and the common man for over forty years. The novel has a strong, intriguing plot and shows remarkable technical expertise in the handling of the narration. This novel is not, however, "easy." Many readings are necessary to understand all the subtleties in the story of Willie Stark. All the King's Men is a mature work by an

experienced craftsman who has a deep understanding of the nature of human experience.

Over the course of the next forty-three years Warren published many more novels, poems, essays, articles, and a unique work that can best be described as a verse novel — *Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices*. The death of Robert Penn Warren on September 15, 1989 after a long illness deprived America of not only an excellent writer but also a genuinely good man. Warren was a friendly, broad-minded, curious man who was always interested in the thoughts of others. He was a keen, probing thinker who would not let himself be bogged down in hopeless sentimentality and nostalgia. While he believed in the importance of history and disliked some of the "advances" of the modern

world (he refused to watch television, for example), he realized that it was impossible to turn back the clock and developed an amazing ability to change with the times. His works have displayed the same durability as their author, retaining profound relevance for the contemporary reader and exhibiting sufficient technical ability to satisfy even the most discriminating students of literature.

Thanks to Professors Ward Allen, B.R. Breyer, Madison Jones, and Frank Owsley for their contributions to this article.

## Bearded Oaks

The oaks, how subtle and marine,  
Bearded, and all the layered light  
Above them swims; and thus the scene,  
Recessed, awaits the positive night.

So, waiting, we in the grass now lie  
Beneath the languorous tread of light:  
The grasses, kelp-like, satisfy  
The nameless motions of the air.

Upon the floor of light, and time,  
Unmurmuring, of polyp made,  
We rest; we are, as light withdraws,  
Twin atolls on a shelf of shade.

Ages to our construction went,  
Dim architecture, hour by hour:  
And violence, forgot now, lent  
The present stillness all its power.

The storm of noon above us rolled,  
Of light the fury, furious gold,  
The long drag troubling us, the depth:  
Dark is unrocking, unripling, still.

Passion and slaughter, ruth, decay  
Descend, minutely whispering down,  
Silted down swaying streams, to lay  
Foundation for our voicelessness.

All our debate is voiceless here,  
As all our rage, the rage of stone;  
If hope is hopelessness, then fearless is fear,  
And history is thus undone.

Our feet once wrought the hollow street  
With echo when the lamps were dead  
At windows, once our headlight glare  
Disturbed the doe that, leaping, fled.

I do not love you less that now  
The caged heart makes iron stroke,  
Or less that all that light once gave  
The graduate dark should now revoke.

We live in time so little time  
And we learn all so painfully,  
That we may spare this hour's term  
To practice for eternity.

—Robert Penn Warren

## Birth of Love

Season late, day late, sun just down, and the sky  
Cold gunmetal but with a wash of live rose, and she,  
From the water the color of sky except where  
Her motion has fractured it to shivering splinters of silver,  
Rises. Stands on the raw grass. Against  
The new-curdling night of spruces, nakedness  
Glimmers and, at bosom and flank, drips  
With fluent silver. The man,

Some ten strokes out, but now hanging  
Motionless in the gunmetal water, feet  
Cold with the coldness of depth, all  
History dissolving from him, is  
Nothing but an eye. Is an eye only. Sees

The body that is marked by his use, and Time's,  
Rise, and in the abrupt and unsustaining element of air,  
Sway, lean, grapple the pond-bank. Sees  
How, with that posture of female awkwardness that is,  
And is the stab of, suddenly perceived grace, breasts bulge down in  
The pure curve of their weight and buttocks  
Moon up and, in that swelling unity,  
Are silver, and glimmer. Then

The body is erect, she is herself, whatever  
Self she may be, and with an end of the towel grasped in each hand,  
Slowly draws it back and forth across back and buttocks, but  
With face lifted toward the high sky, where  
The over-wash of rose color now fails. Fails, though no star  
Yet throbs there. The towel, forgotten,  
Does not move now. The gaze  
Remains fixed on the sky. The body,

Profiled against the darkness of spruces, seems  
To draw to itself, and condense in its whiteness, what light  
In the sky yet lingers or, from  
The metallic and abstract severity of water, lifts. The body,  
With the towel now trailing loose from one hand, is  
A white stalk from which the face flowers gravely toward the high sky.  
This moment is non-sequential and absolute, and admits  
Of no definition, for it  
Subsumes all other, and sequential, moments, by which  
Definition might be possible. The woman,

Face yet raised, wraps,  
With a motion as though standing in sleep,  
The towel about her body, under the breasts, and,  
Holding it there, hieratic as lost Egypt and erect,  
Moves up the path that, stair-steep, winds  
Into the clamber and tangle of growth. Beyond  
The lattice of dusk-dripping leaves, whiteness  
Dimly glimmers, goes. Glimmers and is gone, and the man,

Suspended in his darkling medium, stares  
Upward where, though not visible, he knows  
She moves, and in his heart he cries out that, if only  
He had such strength, he would put his hand forth  
And maintain it over her to guard, in all  
Her out-goings and in-comings, from whatever  
Inclemency of sky or slur of the world's weather  
Might ever be. In his heart  
He cries out. Above

Height of the spruce-night and heave of the far mountain, he sees  
The first star pulse into being. It gleams there.

I do not know what promise it makes to him.

—Robert Penn Warren

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# Mountain Morning

by Linda Fly

For the fourth morning, the sky hung heavy with the threat of snow. I stumbled the last few feet into the semi-darkness of the barn, knelt and carefully slid the Nubian nanny from my aching shoulders into the waiting straw of the last stall. When the herd had shown up without Sugar, I had set out to find her. She had been lying in the path, a half-mile from the cabin, panting hard between coughing bouts, too weak to stand.

Pushing to my feet, I stretched hard, pulling the kinks from my back before fetching a water pail for Sugar. Setting it close to her head, I stroked her face, talking quietly, "If you don't drink up, you're gonna dehydrate and die. Lord knows I can't afford to lose four does in two days." Buck, my half-grown collie, ambled a half-step ahead of me as we left the barn and stepped out into the warming sunshine. Exhausted from nursing goats through the night, I hunkered down with my back against the rough logs and closed my burning eyes. I dosed until Buck prodded my dangling hands with his cold nose. Scratching behind his ears, I voiced my worries aloud, "Well, Buck, if we lose many more goats we aren't gonna have enough to sell to meet the land payment in June. Looks like I'm gonna have to go see that vet. Damn! Sixty miles one way and another chunk outta the savings. I don't know how we're gonna make it even as it stands now." Ruffling his hair, I stood up. "Well, you're doing the best you can, aren't ya? Hell of it is, so am I!" Pointing to the open barn door, I commanded, "Watch the goats, Buck" then strode up the hill to my one-room cabin.

I changed boots, then stepped back out. For a moment, I stood

gazing around my place. Blue Rock Creek was barely visible, winding along the far edge of the meadow down past the barn. Just outside of the treeline bordering the meadow, I spotted the stag with three of his five does. They had been here two years ago when I first looked over this hillside farm. I had made a point to hunt away from their territory. In spite of being worried and tired, I smiled as I remembered Judy's summer visit. "Why don't you come back to San Francisco with me?" she had asked. "Haven't you had enough? Face it Jenny, this fire has burned you out."

I had wiped the dripping sweat from the tip of my nose, then leaned on the half-raised barn wall. "I'm not licked yet. I still have a few bucks

place and you are alone up here except for a neighbor who lives twelve miles away—all uphill..."

"...and only in the summer."

"Only in the summer?"

"Yeah, Don hates the muddy roads in winter so he leaves for the city."

"You have a burned down cabin..."

"I can salvage that one room." I pointed to two walls still standing.

"That's not much. And, your barn is only partially rebuilt. Only a few of your animals survived. Why don't you be sensible and come back to the city? You could stay with me until you found some place that you really liked."

"I already have." I quietly replied.

"Have what?"

---

*"Haven't you had enough? Face it Jenny, this fire has burned you out."*

---

and a half a chance."

"Why are you so determined to stay on this inhospitable hillside?"

"Come on. Can you seriously ask me that after having been up here for a week?"

"Yes, I can."

"You've seen the deer and heard the coyotes. You've seen the hawk soaring." I waved toward the red-tail floating above the meadow. "I don't know what to say if you can't see it for yourself."

That night beneath the soft glow of a full moon, Judy tried once again, "Jenny, be sensible. There isn't any running water, the only light you have are kerosene lamps..."

"...and the sun." I interjected cheerfully.

"Alright..."

"...and the moon."

"Try to be serious, okay?"

I shrugged. "Okay."

"You are building a wood stove from an oil drum to save money, there are rattlesnakes all over the

"Found a place I really like. Right here. Judy, we've been friends a long time but you just don't realize. There aren't any bobcats in the city, or little lizards that change colors or any place to walk that isn't wall to wall people. You can't even take a breath that someone else hasn't recently breathed. Right here is where I belong."

I shook the memories from my mind and headed for my truck. Near the bottom of Buzzard Peak, I shifted into low and crawled around the first sharp bend. The empty truck slithered from side to side as the wheels sometimes held, sometimes spun in the hub-deep muck.

Big wet flakes were drifting from the leaden sky by the time I got the medication that I needed for my small herd. When I reached the foot of the mountain, it looked as if God had ripped open several large feather pillows and was intent on dumping them all at once. I made it to Miss Kitty's boundary, a third of

the way home, before I lost the road and slid into a snow-filled ditch. With the precious vials in my mackinaw pocket, I shoved open the door and headed for the still-visible posts of Miss Kitty's cattle fence. With one hand on the top wire, I struggled through the rapidly deepening snow. A wind came up, blowing the snow into blinding sheets. By the time that a capricious gust tore a temporary hole in the snow curtain, my hands felt like chunks of ice, in spite of my thick gloves. For a fleeting moment, I caught a glimpse of yellow lamp light.

A wrinkled, brown veteran of many mountain winters, Miss Kitty hurried me to the stove and poured coffee for the two of us while the sharp contours of the lean mountain were buried by mounds of white.

We awoke to the heavy silence of continued snow. Toward the end of the second day, it trickled to a halt. That night was clear and the thermometer plummeted.

The third day we awoke to a sparkling blue sky. Shouldering a pack and a rifle, I bid Miss Kitty good-bye. Her dark eyes reflected her concern, "You must go, I know. But nine people die in snow like this. You be careful, yes."

I nodded. "I'll be all right. Thanks for everything." I moved out with a brisk but measured stride. Nothing moved. Drifts were waist deep. The soft crust couldn't support my weight and I fought for every mile that I traveled. It was dusky dark when I topped the last rise to my cabin. Silence. I shivered. Swinging into the cabin, I dropped the pack. Lighting a lantern, I touched the vials in my pocket as I walked out into the unnatural stillness.

### *With one hand on the top wire, I struggled through the rapidly deepening snow.*

I found the billy goat first. I stepped on his frozen foreleg when my foot broke through the snow crust. There were six more before I got to the barn, young Southern California does. Buck lay in the open

doorway of the barn. His dark blood stained the ground. The prints on the trampled snow told the story of starving coyotes pushed to attack the young dog. He had fought, but he was still just an overgrown pup. I knelt and stroked the stiff hair, blinking back tears. Standing up, I brushed the snow from my knees. I didn't want to go in, yet I could hear faint rustlings and a few tentative baas. Most of the lovely, long-eared goats were dead. Disease, hunger, thirst, and cold had wiped them out. I gritted my teeth as I shot five of the fevered animals.

### *Goats shared the cabin with me that night.*

In the far corner, hiding in the deepest shadows, seven does huddled. Honey, one of the lead does, was among them. Her sleek black sides and fawn belly were dull with the beginnings of the sickness. A half-grown buck stood beside Honey, nervously shaking his head. After injecting all of them with the medication, I clipped a leather lead onto Honey's collar and led her out into the night.

The other goats followed hesitantly, baaing their frightened questions. Goats shared the cabin with me that night. When dawn tinged on the horizon, I buried Buck in a shallow grave chipped from the frozen ground. Gazing around the awakening hills, I listened to the familiar gurgle of the small, fast-running creek near the cabin.

Then, with a heavy heart, I hoisted my pack, clipped the lead on Honey, took up my rifle, and lantern. I stepped out and up the path, never looking back.

It was slow going. At times, I carried one or the other of the exhausted younger goats. Following my previous trail, we made it to Miss Kitty's an hour after dark. That night, as I stared into the kerosene glow,

Miss Kitty asked, "What will you do?"

I shook my head and sighed. "Give the goats to you so I can leave and find work."

"You will leave for good?"

I shrugged. "What else can I do?"

"If your heart does not tell you, I cannot," she replied.

I looked up wearily. "What do you expect of me? How can I stay? With what? That first year a drought wiped out my truck garden." I stood and restlessly paced. "This past summer that drunken city boy didn't douse his campfire and burned a good part of this mountain. Most of

my land was caught in that fire. Then, no one knew who he was and I, of course, didn't have any insurance. So, I wound up with part of a cabin, no barn and my hogs turned into inedible bacon." I stopped and ran a calloused hand through my short dark hair. I drew a ragged breath. "I put everything I had into them goats and now this. I have enough to see me through a couple of weeks in the city but that's all."

"Bad luck, yes." Miss Kitty conceded. "But, I too have seen drought and fire and death. My Bob, dead. A bull goes him. Bleed to death before we get to doctor." She shook her head. "Ah, yes," she sighed, "this mountain asks much, but," she spread her hands, "one becomes much, no?"

"You know I've tried," I protested softly. "I'm goin' out to check the goats." With the lantern pushing back the darkness, I shuffled out to the back stall. Honey leaned her head against my faded jeans. The others crowded closer. "You don't belong here, do you girl?" I spoke my thoughts aloud. "You're an Egypt goat raised in Southern Cal. Why in the world did I drag you up here?" Then in the back of my mind I heard grandma's voice echoing across the years. It was the night after my parents were killed by a drunk driver. "How can you stand it?" I had cried out.

Her old arms had held me close,  
"Why chile, we store up the good  
times so's they kin he'p us through  
the bad 'uns. The bad times, why  
they's what makes us strong."

"But how can you go on?" I'd  
insisted.

"Thar's the diff'rence 'tween girls  
and womenfolks. Girls jest sorta lay  
down and give up when the bad  
times come callin' but we women,  
why we jest set oun jaws 'n git on  
with the livin'."

Standing there in the animal-  
warm barn, I rembered how honey  
had sunk through the snow crust,  
sometimes getting mired in drifts,  
but each time she had struggled  
to free herself. She was a strong-  
willed, srtong-bodied doe-leader.  
Good herd foundation. The moun-  
tain had weeded out the weak, the  
easily panicked stock, just as life  
weeded out those unwilling to meet  
its challenges.

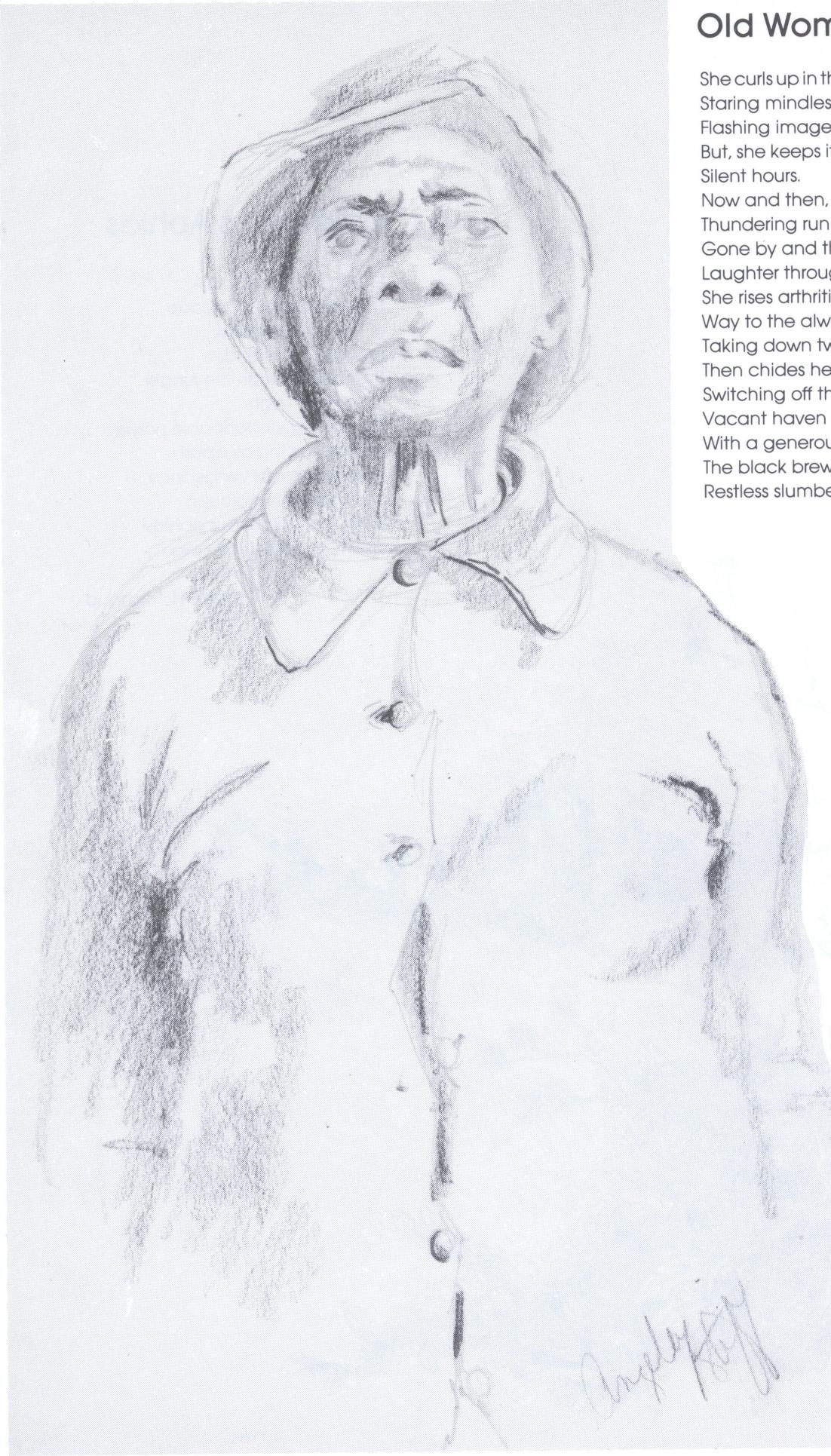
Shutting the stall gate, I blew out  
the lantern and carefully refastened  
the barn door. Miss Kitty was pouring  
fresh coffee when I walked in. She  
glanced up. Our eyes met. She  
nodded once to herself then  
remarked, "I will keep the young  
that are kidded, yes?"

"Fair enough." I sat down and  
sipped the steaming brew. "It'll be  
about mid-summer before I get  
back."

"Summer so pretty, yes?" she  
smiled at me.



Lori West



## Old Woman

She curls up in the corner of the faded couch,  
Staring mindlessly at the chattering box of  
Flashing images from a make-believe land.  
But, she keeps it on for company among the  
Silent hours.

Now and then, she can almost hear the  
Thundering run of children from years  
Gone by and the ringing of their  
Laughter through the empty rooms.  
She rises arthritically and makes her  
Way to the always-warm coffee pot.  
Taking down two cups, she fills them  
Then chides herself for forgetfulness.  
Switching off the lights, she retreats to the  
Vacant haven of her bed.  
With a generous dash of Sегram's Seven in  
The black brew she sinks into  
Restless slumber.

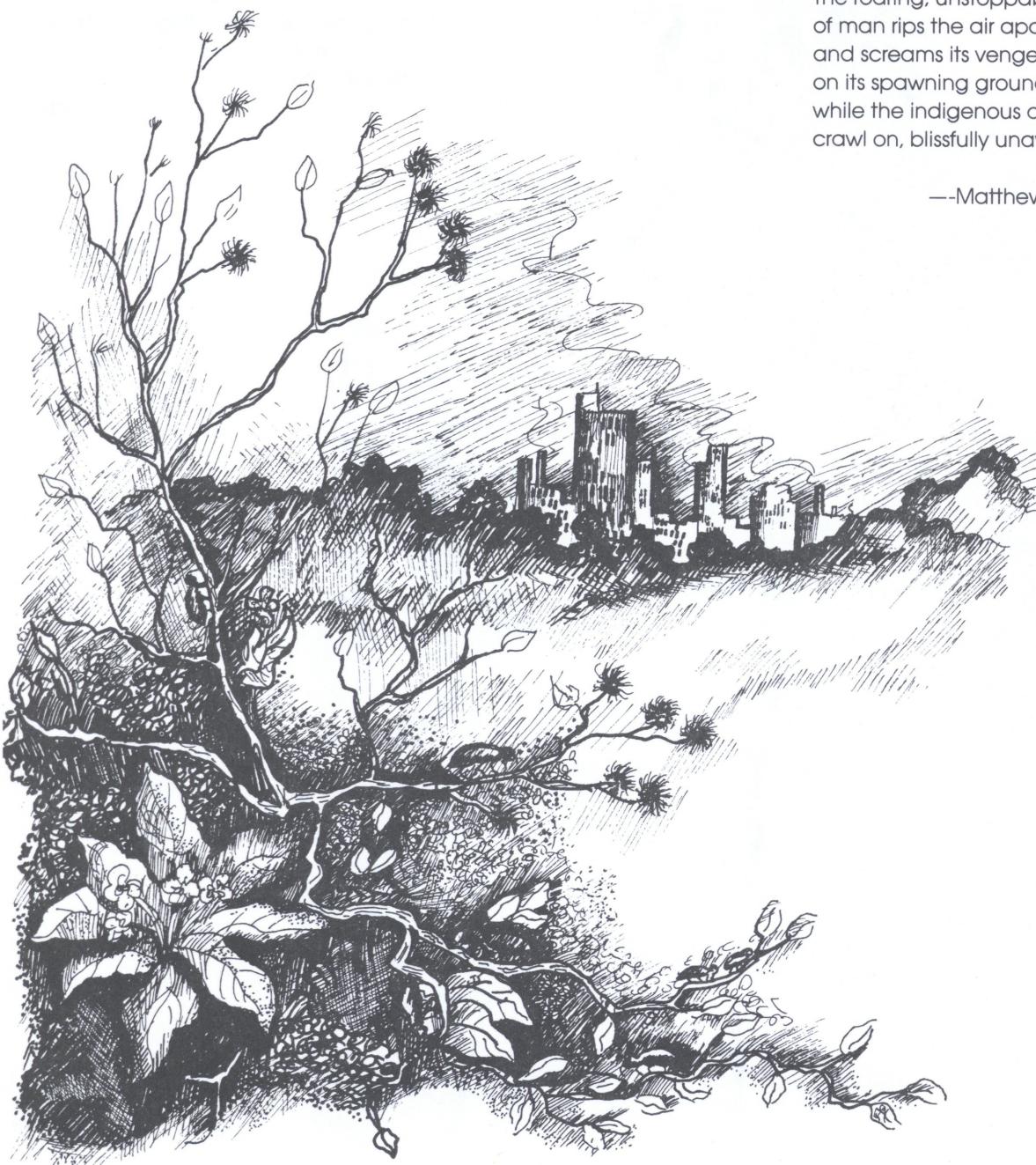
Linda Fly

Angela Stiff

## Indigenous Aphids

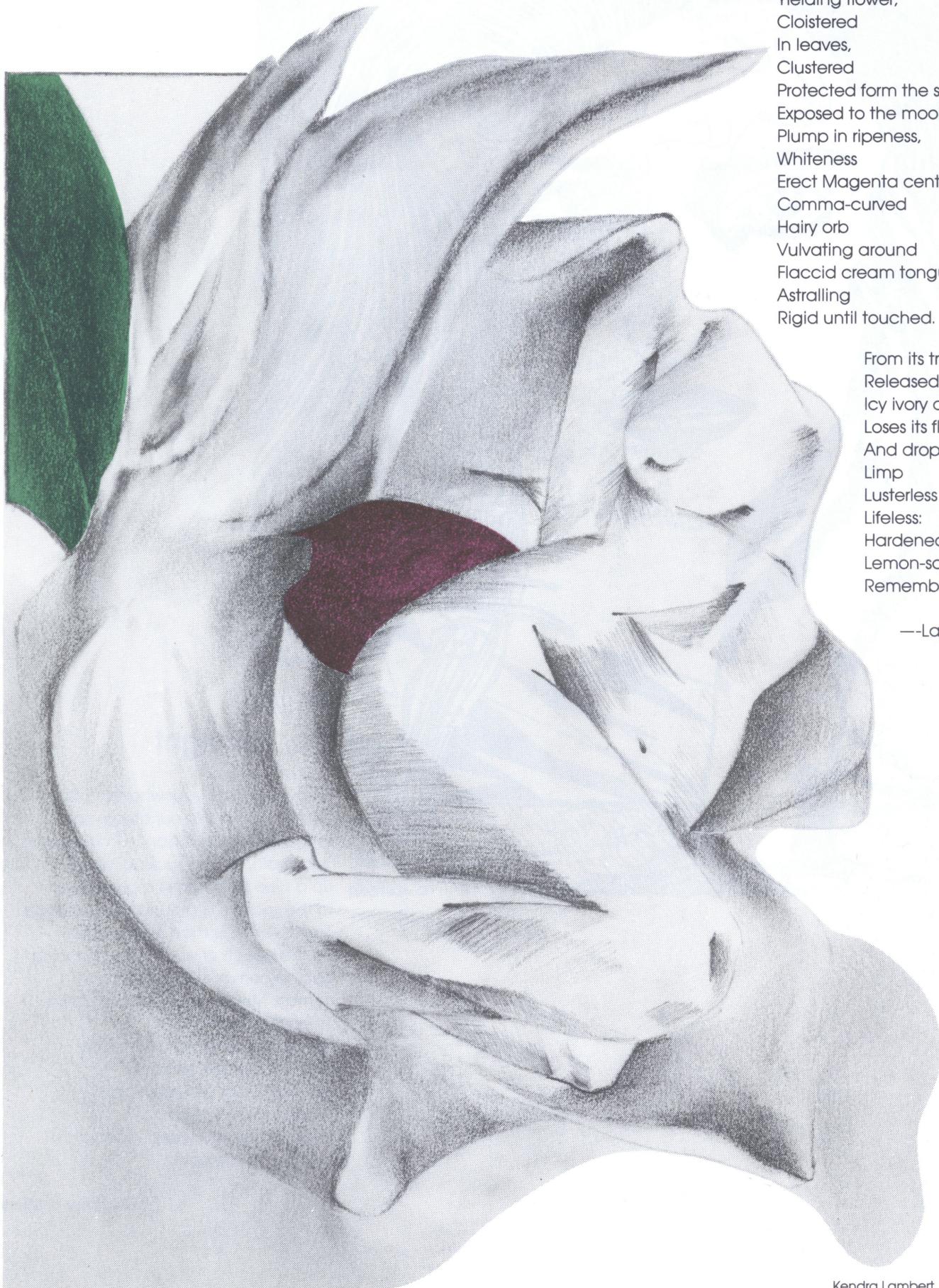
I sit on the grassy bank  
mesmerized by a parade  
of train car facades,  
ignoring the aphids  
that hike through the jungle  
of my fury thigh.  
The roaring, unstoppable power  
of man rips the air apart  
and screams its vengeance  
on its spawning ground  
while the indigenous aphids  
crawl on, blissfully unaware.

—Matthew H. Michaud



Lori West

## The Browning of a Magnolia



Yielding flower,  
Cloistered  
In leaves,  
Clustered  
Protected from the sun  
Exposed to the moon.  
Plump in ripeness,  
Whiteness  
Erect Magenta center  
Comma-curved  
Hairy orb  
Vulvating around  
Flaccid cream tongues,  
Astralling  
Rigid until touched.

From its tree nest  
Released  
Icy ivory disc  
Loses its fleshy petticoat  
And drops its skirt.  
Limp  
Lusterless  
Lifeless:  
Hardened brown  
Lemon-scented aroma of  
Remembered passion.

—Laquita Thompson



C.NAYLOR  
Chris Naylor

## The Birthright

I shoulder aside your whelming tide  
and plummet into our dream-spring  
to touch the rocks, dance in the spray,  
and strain, thumb-sucking, with Finn's salmon  
up a blue Shannon in a green land  
to the spawning ground of knowledge.  
There waits the mad Manannan  
on the beach of your cheek, handing  
out the common inheritance  
of man, Milesian and Danaan alike.  
To each his own sidhe  
with still depths and clear pools  
that reflect more perfectly  
the brightness of stars shining  
in your hair, my Niamh.  
Encircled by your sleep-laden arms  
I claim my birthright.

Matthew H. Michaud

# November 1989

by Roberta Popylopopogus

(A cool breeze is blowing down the concourse and all is well with the world, right? In Xanadu or Oz perhaps. Welcome to Planet Earth.)

I was walking down the concourse today when I had a sense of something. Something mystifying and terrifying, enlightening and exciting—deja vu.

Back in '69 I was just over a year old. Like most children I was moving right along, full steam ahead. Progressing from mushy gushy green bean pudding from a jar to real solid food (i.e. mashed potatoes and alphabet soup). I was learning to walk and run. Learning to put sounds and various gurgles together into words. Learning all the basic skills (i.e. potty training and table manners) needed for survival in a grown-up world. Meanwhile I was quite unaware of what was happening around me.

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*In other words, I was too young-too young to be hip. I am the farthest thing from groovy.*

---

In other words, I was too young—too young to be hip. I am the farthest thing from groovy. I am just your ordinary, run-of-the-mill college student. Actually, I am kinda boring. You see, I wouldn't know mescaline from a horse's patut, have never been one with a tree and the universe and I spend my rainy days reading Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson in hopes that somehow, through some strange process, I will acquire some sense of groovy. Obviously that process is working, for how else could I have felt that sense of deja vu?

There is a song from way back when (when most of us were in diapers and playpens) that talks about how groovy it was that people were finally getting together. Well, looking around me, I think, perhaps, maybe—it might be happening again. By some act of God, have we, the baby-boomers' babies, awoken to the fact that there may be life beyond the BMW and \$\$\$?

What follows is a moment-by-moment, play-by-play of my walk down the concourse today. The facts are fairly accurate and the opinions are expressly mine and do not necessarily reflect those of the Circle staff or the Editorial Board.

It is around 10 o'clock and I am heading out the doors of Haley Center. I turn and make my way toward my next class. Busy day on the concourse. Lots of people and tables and causes, no doubt. My attention is attracted to a table coming up on the right. Two girls

and a guy are seated at the table. Eyes hidden behind tinted sunglasses, they speak among themselves. On the table before them, held down with rocks and stones of various sizes, are pamphlets.

Starving horses.

Cats with electrodes implanted in their heads.

Dead/dying puppies.

Crippled/brain damaged/emaciated/mutilated animals.

This is PETA. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

PETA encourages humane treatment of animals and works for

legislation strictly governing their treatment in laboratories. Pretty self-explanatory? Yes and no.

Did you know:

- \* MAZOLA paid \$1,500 to have mice drowned in jars of cooking oil;
- \* BENETTON Cosmetics Corp. force-feeds bath gel and shampoo to rats;
- \* 26 animals die each minute in the U.S. to test new shampoos, oven cleaners, hairsprays and laxatives;
- \* animal tests are not required by law, but are done to protect companies legally?

Amazing. Appalling. Disgusting.

What do they do? Do mad scientists raid the Humane Society and cart off animals one by one to basement labs to torture, maim and otherwise mutilate them?

And how far will these animal rights groups we hear so much about go? Do they object to all animal testing? What about cancer and AIDS research? What about the research that could save millions of lives?

Pouring over my PETA newsletter with a jumble of questions running through my mind, I walk on.

Once upon a time, everyone had a cause. Everyone had their battle, their opinion, their soap-box on which to stand. The strange thing is that those days stayed only a short while and then the dissenters retired their colors and their ideals to go headlong into the "Me Generation." The peaceniks/beatniks/freaks did not retire to a utopian island, for a utopia does not exist. They did not find all the love and peace and

flowers they had hoped for. Instead, they assessed their lives, their ideals and plunged headlong into the river of life.

There is an abundance of earth stickers today. I stick one on my sweater and reach for a pamphlet from the table before me. "We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors; we have borrowed it from our children," it reads. Pretty profound, huh?

This is EAO. The Environmental Awareness Organization.

More literature.

Exxon  
Flurocarbons  
Medical Wastes  
Extinction

"Recycle," says the guy behind the table. But recycle what I wonder. "Cans, glass, paper," he says. We've all seen the bin on the concourse. Sign on the side reads, "Recycle the Plainsman." I mean to recycle, really I do. I mean to do a lot of things. Certainly we intend to, but we are busy these days you and I.

Too busy. Too busy to find a trash bin rather than slip that scrap of paper out the car window. Too busy to pick up that bit of litter beneath our feet. Too busy to worry about the rainforests and the ozone layer.

So I am not the epitome of an environmentalist. I own a Green Peace tee-shirt and "The Environmental Handbook," that must count for something. I think about whales and wildlife. I'm angry at Exxon and wonder where we will be in 50 or 100 years. I care . . . to an extent. But do I care enough? Do WE care enough?

Earth Day. According to my groovy (circa 1970) handbook, Earth Day is an annual national environmental "teach-in." "Twenty years of saving our planet" the tee-shirt reads. Love the earth and it will love you, right? Hmmm.

Memories coming through. A commercial coming over the waves. An Indian stands looking over a littered interstate. A single tear trails down his face.

Sit-ins. Protests. Visions from a million light years ago.

Lately everywhere we look we see mass production. Homes, automobiles, even babies are manufactured. Carbon copies, perfect replicas. Children are analogous to these other things, the way I see it. From the moment of conception, children are nurtured, loved and cared for by parents. We've all heard that we are products of our environments and for the most part, that is true. Upon arriving at college and looking in the mirror, many of us saw an image staring back that looked remarkably like one or both of our parents. Scary, huh? (Sorry, Mom).

tory books and even on our concourse here at Auburn, we see students getting involved. Some would label these people with names of varying degrees and yet the urge to discover and explore is the nature of the student. Thus is the outgrowth of organizations and various societies on campus explained.

Wandering along, another table comes up on the right. Crowd of people gathered around. Green-sneakered foot propped on the table. Face familiar—Jane, I think, Jane Orr. And there is Michele Smith, a friend of a friend. Their names are on petitions circulating. Violation of What? Free expression, maybe? Violation of something, certainly. Four other girls sit with them. Heated discussion. It seems that recently a repeat-offender was acquitted of a rape charge because the defense suggested that the victim "asked for it." What? Throw out your mini-skirts

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### *So what happens when we are thrown suddenly into an environment free from parental distraction (i.e. college)?*

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Children are surrounded by adult role models, taking on the ideals, hopes and fears of their parental units; favorite foods and recreation, religions and political philosophies. So what happens when we are thrown suddenly into an environment free from parental distraction (i.e. college)? At first, of course, there is confusion and fear. Then suddenly the world is a new and different place; a place filled with new ideas, alternate lifestyles and beliefs. It is then that we begin to find ourselves. Many new pathways down which to travel reveal themselves. Each of those roadways leading to the discovery of self; leading to the real creature hidden within the effigy created by our society and our environment, discovering the vast opportunities that lie there.

So what does all this mean? Looking through current periodicals, in his-

and spiked heels girls. Must mean turtle-necks all around.

This is NOW. The National Organization for Women.

Seems that there was a chapter here long ago, but it disbanded and now . . . they're back. Back and ready to work for what they really believe in.

More literature.

Equal Rights Amendment.  
Racism and Sexism.  
Reproductive Rights.  
Violence Against Women.

What vivid images those few phrases bring to mind. Images dark and foreboding. Images from the past and even of today.

Did you know:

- \* on average women are paid 60 cents for every dollar men are paid;
- \* by the year 2000 it is estimated that the entire poor population will be comprised completely of women and their children?

Wait. Sounds a bit like a Virginia Slims ad, huh? We HAVE come a long way, have we not? Thought we'd gotten past the discrimination bit.

NOW certainly has been visible on campus lately. But I have so many questions. Exactly what does the Equal Rights Amendment entail? ERA summons certain images in itself. So much fervor and opinion, dissention. How far do equal rights go? Will I be sent to war? I don't do war.

And what about abortion? I am not pro-abortion . . .

Neither are they. But what does pro-choice mean? Not pro-death, pro-murder and certainly not pro-abortion. It's the right to choose, to choose what will happen in your life, to your body. The right to decide your own fate.

The abortion thing certainly is hot lately. So many voices. Opinions. Accusations. Demonstrations. Name-calling. And yet NOW is so much more than that. NOW is more than ERA. NOW works for date-rape seminars, rape counseling, education. NOW is women working together for each other. NOW is caring and sharing. Making a difference.

Misunderstandings/ridiculing/questioning/arresting. Sticks and stones. Seems as if I've heard something like this before. All of it seems so familiar. Thoughts preserved. Voices coming over the waves to the ears of a 3-year-old. Retention of material. Flash-back, 1970? Deja vu?

Questions plague me throughout the morning and by the time I meet

my friend Jessy for lunch, I have had enough time to ponder and worry and become frustrated with the meaning of it all.

I sit just beyond the War Eagle windows. More propaganda. Reverse-images of war cries/peace cries/ freedom cries stare at me from the windows. What do I have to do to get away from it all? Tables on the concourse. Flyers everywhere. Messages of meetings, fundraisers, speakers—all around me.

Here comes Jessy; NOW flyer and burger in hand. Here it comes again.

"Have you seen this? Well you really ought to."

(Can't seem to get a word in edgewise here. Of course I've seen it and read it and can't we talk about something else?)

Between bites of BLT we discuss "stuff." Jessy expresses her frustration and I ponder my own.

"What's been happening?"

(Here or around the world? Well . . . dogs, cats and people are being killed. Rain forests are being destroyed even as we speak and the environment is on the way out.)

"Everything's fine."

(I suppose. If you ignore the teary-eyed, bulging stomached faces. If you turn away and pretend that you don't hear and see all the crap coming across the lines, over the wires—from the four corners of the earth.)

Pushing away the styrofoam food-tray, I think of the 500 years it will take for it to decompose. I clear my throat at the thought of all the chemical what-nots we will later breathe because of it and suddenly I am not hungry at all.

Lunch passes quickly. Sparse comments/abundant thoughts. A cool breeze whips at my jacket as we walk back to class.

By one o'clock I am back on the concourse. Shift change time.

Eager, new faces, ready to proclaim/complain/explain. I walk with eyes diverted (who needs yet another confrontation?) and head for the table over by the wall. I see a familiar face or two behind the table from which hangs the sign, "Amnesty International."

More flashbacks (post-Leary). The word itself "amnesty" elicits thoughts of something. What? Canada, Vietnam, little brown tablets? Words printed on a sign or a button or a banner seen in books of long ago. Some stirring of the imagination.

More pamphlets.

Torture.

Children Murdered.

Racism.

Students Arrested.

More havoc. Preposterous accusations.

The violation/desecration/incarceration thing certainly is wide-spread. Turkey, Burma, South Africa—the next thing we know it will be happening here . . . hometown U.S.A., Auburn, Alabama. It is relatively easy to look away when its half way around the world.

What about when it hits home? Here? Nah . . . maybe?

Amnesty International, an organization independent of all religious creeds, economic interests, political factions, governments and ideologies, that works specifically for:

- \* the release of all prisoners of conscience—men, women, children—imprisoned for their beliefs, color, sex, language, ethnic origin or religion, provided that they have neither used nor advocated violence;
- \* fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners;
- \* and an end to torture and execution in all cases.

It seems you are suppose to write a letter to these dictator on behalf of "prisoners of conscience." Can't work huh? What's one letter?

I heard a story long ago that went something like this:

A man was walking along the beach when he came upon a little boy. All around the child were thousands of starfish, washed up upon the sand—dying. The man watched as the boy picked up the starfish, one by one, and threw them back into the ocean. Seeing the slow progress, the man said, "Son there are so many you will never make a difference." With child like optimism the boy, reaching down and picking up another, replied, "It makes a difference to this one," and he threw the creature into the sea.

Who knows? I have a vision of Mr. Despot sitting in a plush office behind a large desk. Letters—piles upon piles of them— lay on the desk. Irritated to the point of insanity, Mr. Despot throws a tantrum and is carted away by little gray men in little white jackets, thus precipitating the release of thousands of prisoners. Unrealistic? Maybe not.

Did you know:

- \* in South Africa children as young as 13 are imprisoned, tortured and even murdered for their political beliefs;
- \* throughout the world men, women and children "disappear" after being taken into police custody;
- \* everyday around the world, people are killed without any pretense of legality?

Whoa. Stop the presses. What's today? That's what I thought. I thought we'd gotten past the injustice/discrimination bit too. People have rights. Right?

This is unbelievable. This is 1989 folks. What's happening?

What indeed? Are people starting to really care? People are starting to speak out against what they feel to be ethically and morally wrong.

Opinions are being raised and voices are being heard.

I've met lots of people today, people from various backgrounds and walks of life. I have seen a few peace signs and a flower or two, but no drugs or protest banners. It's the people that really matter. Individuals who care enough. People who realize that caring has nothing to do with labels or social groups. People caring just for the sake of caring—just because.

downtown Suburbia, U.S.A.; maybe they did return to their money and their cars and all that was/is middle-class America.

But they took with them memories by the trunkfull. They had discovered the truth, the beautiful truth of flowers and peace, the hideous reality of war and blood and bad trips. For the first time in recent history a generation did not blindly follow, blindly accept the ideals and thoughts and opinions of their elders

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*I have seen a few peace signs and a flower or two, but no drugs or protest banners.*

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Guess maybe all of this does relate back to 'then'. Memories accumulated in the collective unconscious of a generation—after a generation. Feelings and thoughts prevailing through the years. Finding their way into our lives, into our worlds.

Lately we have been hearing a lot about hippies and the age of Aquarius, what with the twentieth anniversary of Woodstock. But what were the hippies? Were they rebels or revolutionaries; freaks or idealists; idiots or visionaries? They were not some strange and extraordinary species, not a bizarre mutation, they were normal, everyday kids, a lot like you and me, who looked around and found what they saw lacking.

What they saw was life straight off the television screen. Mothers reminiscent of Donna Reed, fathers like Howard Cunningham. They saw a society plunging madly after the almighty dollar and quickly into full-scale war. Upon viewing their middle-class American lives they set out in search of something more than a Cleaver family existence; decided to challenge the words of their parents and Ed Sullivan.

So they split. Packed up their hopes and dreams and set forth to find their own world and their place in it. And maybe in the end they did end up returning to their split-level, ranch existence on Oak Street in

as gospel. And when, even today, on rainy days when their stocks fall and the BMW is on the fritz, they can remember, recall and truly know how things are suppose to be.

I am not suggesting that campus activists today are revolutionary, radical visionaries. I am not proposing that we are 80's flower children, what I am suggesting is that perhaps by looking back on the events of yesteryear, we can gain a perspective on ourselves and the world we live in.

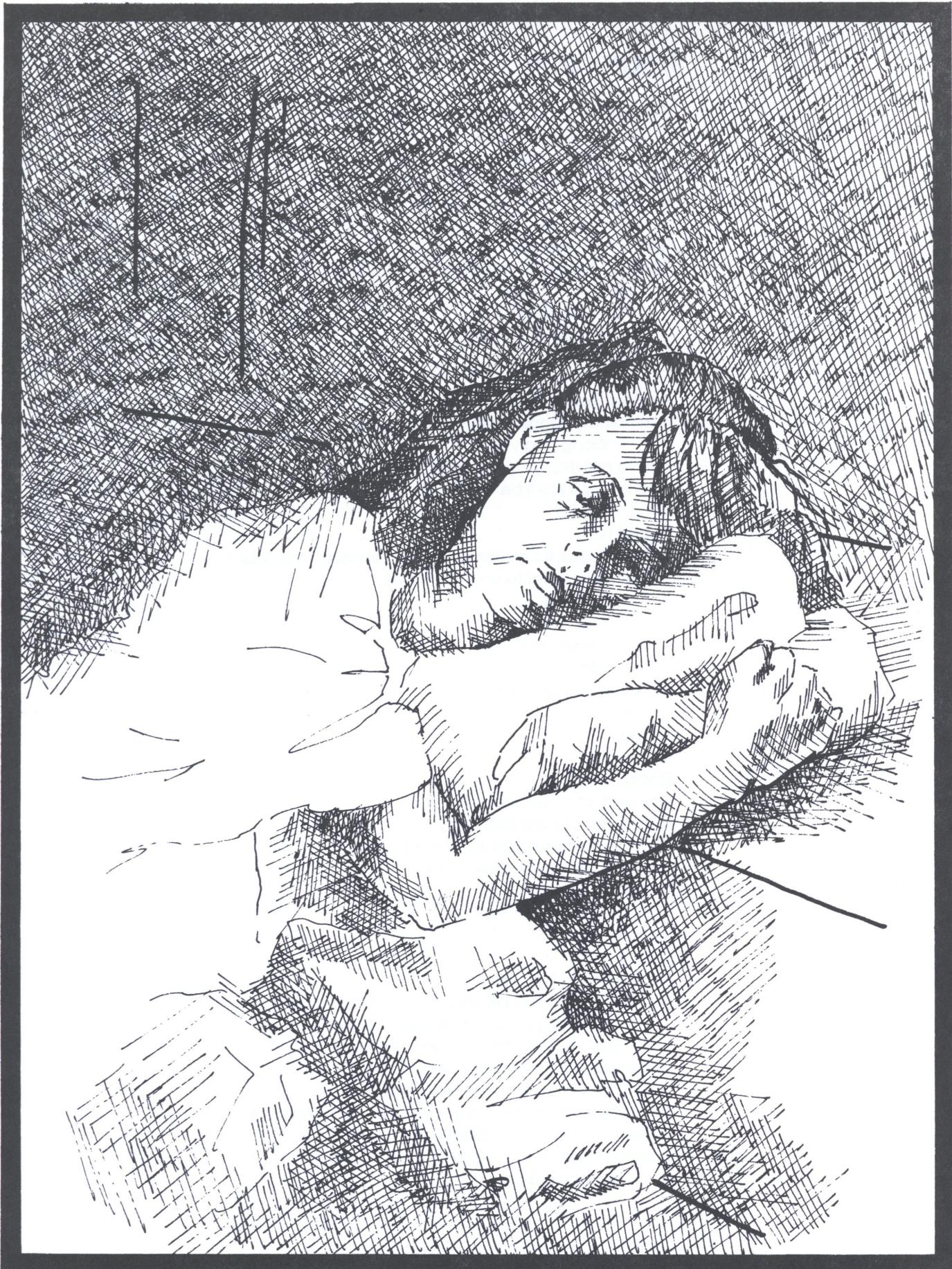
From the signs I've seen today—the times are changing. Maybe we can make a difference. Maybe we each can find our niche in this troubled, mixed up place called Earth, and from that place, do something, say something, feel something that will make a difference. So call me a groover wanna-be, a socialist or a bohemian-new age hippie. Laugh or talk about me if you like—I don't mind. Who knows—maybe we can't change the world either, but at least we can try and shake it up a bit.

As I take my place beside my friend at the Amnesty table and prepare to give MY speil, I realize—it is pretty groovy that people are finally getting together.

## Regression

Somewhere beyond the dirty window pane  
In the shallow hollowness  
    a siren wails.  
Beyond the door on the 17th floor,  
Down the hall from the drunkard  
    she lies.  
Quiet—not peaceful  
Third in a hierarchy, beneath the strong and the weak.  
Placed there to suffer  
    at the hands of what  
        “they” deem as moral,  
    Upright,  
    Just.  
A million echoes rage in her mind.  
A mind now sluggish with something  
    strong and vile.  
From a needle, less than sterile.  
Who knows if she'll be fertile  
    again?  
Forced here  
To this ageless, faceless man in the darkness of the hour,  
Skillful in his power to do what others  
    will not  
    can not  
    would not  
    do.  
Workers in the dim of this smelly  
Room.  
Womb.  
Tomb...  
Empty.  
Wrestling with the powers that be,  
The powers of press and party—  
Creators of this stagnant, painful scene.  
Later she will catch a taxi home.  
Fearful  
Aching  
Shaking  
Making  
An attempt to live again.  
And the remains will be disregarded in a dumpster,  
    or a baggie, or a toilet, or an alley.  
The unspoken, “evil” thing done in the dark of night.  
Or perhaps she too will find her way from  
    this bloody, rotten horrid stage—  
Be carted away to the city's downtown deathly place.  
Lifeless on the altar of morality, of society  
Lifeless as the soiled remains of what “they”  
    said should be.

-- Christina J. Estes



Angela Stiff

## Sonnet of Disappointment

### Sonnet of Disappointment

Let me address the matter now at hand.  
One glimpse of the perfect luring smile  
Shall shyly hint of how things seem to stand.  
The friendliness attached could last for miles.  
While the event seems ordained by sages,  
Though the heart's pace quickens, one must stay cool.  
While the pleasure-filled sensation rages,  
One must be careful not to be a fool.  
Suddenly! All friendliness turns away.  
What was once a warm friendship is now rude,  
And the dirty trick was not nice to play,  
But one doesn't sit forever and brood.  
And now, as years pass, let this take effect:  
To state, one oft gets not what one expects.

Rachel Bowman

## Contributors

Rachel Bowman is a sophomore in international business from Montgomery, Alabama.

Christina Estes is a senior in public relations-speech from Wetumka, Alabama and is the assistant editor of The Circle.

Linda Fly is an elusive contributor.

Kendra Lambert is the art director for The Circle. She is a junior in visual arts.

Matt Michaud is a senior in English from Montgomery, Alabama. He is the poetry editor for The Circle.

Chris Naylor is a senior from Birmingham, Alabama majoring in visual arts.

Shelly Paap is a senior in visual arts from Cabot, Arkansas.

Roberta Poplopogus is a junior in public relations-journalism from Atlanta, Georgia.

Angela Stiff is a senior in visual arts from Wetumka, Alabama.

Laquita Thompson is another elusive contributor.

Robert Penn Warren is the late Poet Laureat of the United States.

Lori West is a senior in visual arts from Dothan, Alabama.

#### **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

- 1) All submissions should be typed, double-spaced, with the usual left and right margins.
- 2) Submissions are accepted at the Circle office in the Glom suite. If no one is present in the office place your offering in the box on the door.
- 3) If you want your submission returned to you, please provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your submission. This makes life easier for everyone involved.
- 4) Submissions should also have a cover sheet stating the title, the author's name, the author's phone number (for editing purposes), a pseudonym for printing (if desired), and a brief statement for the Contributors List.

